

# HARIJAN

Editor: PYARELAL

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[ TWO ANNAS

## WHY BHANGI QUARTERS ?

(By M. K. Gandhi)

Friends are puzzled over my keen desire to reside in Bhangi quarters in the cities or towns I may visit. To ask why I have not entertained that desire all these years would be more pertinent. To answer why I did not have the desire long ago must be reserved for a future occasion. Just now I must answer why the desire has come upon me at all.

I have for some time been saying that we must all be *bhangis* or untouchables. But it has worried me that I have not accorded the statement with corresponding action. It may not be possible to establish complete accordance with the wish. But it ought to be done so far as possible. Whilst this thought was agitating me, I got the news which I have already shared with the readers that in Gujarat only one well and one temple is shared with Harijans and this in Karadi. Whether the news is true or not is immaterial here. The material thing is the reaction produced on my mind by the news. To be angry was madness. The news quickened the desire for residence in untouchable quarters. I said to myself: 'If I lived apart from Harijans, what right had I to question the action of others who went further in their adherence to untouchability? But whether the others changed their mode or not was not for me to judge. If it was my duty to reside in Harijan quarters I must perform it irrespective of the reaction of the step on the others.' This is the thought which is possessing me and goading me to the adumbrated action.

Consequently I have asked Sheth R. D. Birla to arrange, if at all possible, for my residence in untouchable quarters when I happen to be in Bombay. I have also wired to Sheth G. D. Birla to arrange likewise for Delhi and Shri Brijkishen Chandiwala has already asked for my approval of some arrangement he has made. It goes without saying that I must not impose myself on Harijans anywhere. I must not wound their feelings, if they will not tolerate my presence in their midst. But I fear no such thing.

Incidentally, I notice that some critics rejoice that I shall no longer reside in the Birla House. They do not know that I have been accepting their hospitality for years. I have accepted donations from them for my many constructive activities. The critics do not know of the changes they have imperceptibly made in their life; nor need they or the public in general know these. Such changes are never made for show. At the same

time it is perfectly true that there are wide differences between them and me in outlook. This is no cause for sorrow or wonder. All true change comes from within. Any change brought about by pressure is worthless. I am neither so vain nor so foolish as to hope that all would follow me. And who can say whether I am right or others in what we are doing? It is enough if all of us abide by what we consider to be right. We are all His creatures to do His will, not ours. Doing so, we should all be friends to one another.

Uruli, 25-3-'46

(From *Harijansevak*)

## WHY ONE MORE BURDEN ?

(By M. K. Gandhi)

'Why have I got involved in Nature Cure in the evening of my life?'—this question is being asked me by several people. Had I not enough work on my hands already? Was I not too old to take up new things? Could any one expect me to add to my existing burdens? All these are pertinent questions demanding my careful consideration. But they do not evoke any echo within me. The still small voice within me whispers: 'Why bother about what others say? I have given you a colleague like Dr. Dinshah who understands you and whom you understand. You have confidence in your capacity, having followed Nature Cure as a hobby for over half a century. If you hide this talent and do not make use of it you will be as a thief. It will ill become you. Remember the teaching of the first verse of *Ishopanishad* and surrender all you have to Me. There is nothing that really belongs to you. Only you fancied that something was yours. It is all Mine. Give it also to My creatures like the rest. It will not in any way jeopardize your other work provided only that you have cultivated perfect detachment. You have entertained the desire to live up to 125 years. Its fulfilment or otherwise should not be your concern. Yours is only to understand and do your duty and be careful for nothing.' These are the thoughts that haunt me. It is my third day in this village. The number of patients who come for help is daily increasing. They feel happy and I feel happy in serving them. I am receiving the co-operation of the local people. I know that if I can enter the hearts of the people here, illness will be banished and this village will become a model of cleanliness and health. But if this does not happen, what is that to me? I have only to do the behest of the Master.

Uruli, 25-3-'46

(From *Harijansevak*)

## HOW TO MAKE IT DYNAMIC?

"Violence is bad. I agree with you too that the only substitute for it is constructive activity as symbolized by the Charkha. But the dynamic quality seems to have gone out of it. What should be done to bring out its revolutionary significance?" so asked a friend the other day in the course of a discussion with Gandhiji about the R. I. N. ratings' mutiny. Gandhiji's reply was as brief as it was significant. In one word it was: "Through *tapashcharya*." By *tapashcharya* he meant the *tapashcharya* of knowledge which must be coupled with action for its full expression. The conversation did not proceed further and I doubt whether the friend gave a second thought to the question afterwards. It is however an oft repeated question. It was put to Gandhiji at Calcutta by the Khadi workers of Barkamta. Gandhiji replying said:

### FROM PLENTY TO POVERTY

"Dr. Radha Kumud Mukherji in one of his books has quoted Colebrooke as saying that in India, the home of chronic poverty, the spinning wheel is the provider of butter to bread for the poor. The late R. C. Dutt has shown how the prosperity of the East India Company was founded on their trade in Indian textiles. No part of the world, neither China nor Japan, could produce fabrics to equal them. In the early phase the East India Company battened on the exploitation of its monopoly in Indian textiles. Not only did it bring them immense trade profits, it also gave an impetus to British shipping. Later, Lancashire developed its own textile industry following upon a series of mechanical inventions. This brought it into competition with the Indian textile manufactures. The policy of exploitation of the Indian artisans then gave way to that of destruction of their craft:

"An English writer has observed that the history of cotton is the history of civilization. Politics is the handmaid of commerce. Indian history provides an apt illustration of it. In the heyday of our cotton manufactures we used to grow all the cotton for our needs. The cotton seed was fed to the cattle which provided the health giving milk to the people. Agriculture flourished. The lint was turned into beautiful fabrics of which the *Jamdanis* of Dacca were a specimen. As an off-shoot we had the world-famed dyeing and printing art of Masulipatam. Connoisseurs say that our old indigenous dyes could not be matched by any in the world for their permanence as well as brightness and beauty. All that is gone now. India is today naked. We have to cover her nakedness. If anybody could suggest a better substitute than the spinning wheel for the purpose I would discard the spinning wheel today. But none has been found so far and I dare say none is likely to be found.

### TO END SLAVERY

"The question may however be asked: 'How can the Charkha bring India freedom when it could not prevent its loss?' The reply is that in the past Charkha was not linked with the idea of freedom. Nor did it then symbolize the power of non-violence.

In olden days it symbolized our slavery. We had not realized that our progress, prosperity and even freedom depended on the Charkha or else we should have put up a fight and resorted to Satyagraha to save it from destruction. What was lost through our ignorance and apathy has now to be won back through intelligence and knowledge. We have today ceased to think for ourselves. The Government says that Bengal is a pauper province and we mechanically accept the statement. To call a province which boasts of 6½ crores of population as pauper is only to proclaim our own intellectual bankruptcy. Did not the Governor of Bengal observe in a broadcast talk the other day that the cultivator in Bengal remains unemployed for six months in the year? Can any population in the world subsist while remaining idle for half the year? Even if all the water that the rains bring were captured and harnessed to irrigation it would not keep the masses alive if their enforced unemployment for the better part of the year were not removed. Our real malady is not destitution but laziness, apathy and inertia. You may achieve marvels of irrigational engineering. But well-filled granaries alone cannot and will not end our slavery. To end slavery you must overcome the mental and physical inertia of the masses and quicken their intelligence and creative faculty. It is my claim that the universalization of hand-spinning with a full knowledge of all that it stands for alone can bring that about in a sub-continent so vast and varied as India. I have compared spinning to the central sun and the other village crafts to the various constellations in the solar system. The former gives light and warmth to the latter and sustains them. Without it they would not be able to exist."

### HAS IT FAILED?

Q. "If Swaraj hangs on the thread of hand-spun yarn, as you say, why have we failed to attain it up till now after a quarter of a century of Khadi work?"

A. "Because our labour was not quickened by knowledge. The peace of the grave makes the latter the house of death. But the peace in the soul makes it the seat of divine intelligence. Similarly, soulless labour symbolizes serfdom. Labour illumined with knowledge symbolizes the will to freedom. There is a world of difference between the two. Khadi workers should understand that Khadi work without the mastery of the science of Khadi will be love's labour lost in terms of Swaraj."

### THE ALCHEMY OF KNOWLEDGE

Q. "What do you mean by the science of spinning? What things are included in it?"

A. "I have often said that I can do without food but not without sacrificial spinning. I have also claimed that no one in India has perhaps done his spinning with such unfailing regularity and conscientious diligence as I. And yet I will say that all that by itself cannot take the place of scientific knowledge. Scientific knowledge requires constant probing into the why and wherefore of every little process that you perform. Mere affirmation that in

Charkha there is Swaraj and peace is not enough. A scientific mind will not be satisfied with having things scientific just on faith. He will insist on finding a basis in reason. Faith becomes lame when it ventures into matters pertaining to reason. Its field begins where reason's ends. Conclusions based on faith are unshakable whereas those based on reason are liable to be unstable and vulnerable to superior logic. To state the limitation of science is not to belittle it. We cannot do without either—each in its own place.

#### SCIENTIFIC MIND AND KHADI WORK

"When I first discovered the spinning wheel it was purely through intuition. It was not backed by knowledge so much so that I confused Charkha with Kargha i. e. handloom. Later on, however, I tried to work out its possibilities with the help of the late Maganlal Gandhi. For instance, the question arose: Why should the spindle be made of iron, not brass? Should it be thin or thick? What would be the proper thickness? We began with mill spindles. Then, spindle holders used to be bamboo and wood. Later we came to leather and gut bearings. It was found that spindles got easily bent and were difficult to straighten. So we tried to make them out of knitting needles and ultimately of umbrella wires. All this called for the exercise of the inventive faculty and scientific research.

"A Khadi worker with a scientific mind will not stop there. 'Why Charkha, why not the spinning mill?' he will ask himself. The reply will be that everybody cannot own a spinning mill. If people depend on spinning mills for their clothing, whoever controls the spinning mills will control them and thus there will be an end to individual liberty. Today anyone can reduce the whole of London and New York to submission within 24 hours by cutting off their electric and water supply. Individual liberty and inter-dependence are both essential for life in society. Only a Robinson Crusoe can afford to be all self-sufficient. When a man has done all he can for the satisfaction of his essential requirements he will seek the co-operation of his neighbours for the rest. That will be true co-operation. Thus a scientific study of the spinning wheel will lead on to sociology. The spinning wheel will not become a power for the liberation of India in our hands unless we have made a deep study of the various sciences related to it. It will then not only make India free but point the way to the whole world.

#### DETACHMENT AND COURAGE

"Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru has very aptly remarked that at one time India was not lacking in the inventive spirit but today it has become dormant. Once one gets the scientific outlook it will be reflected in every act of his, in his eating, drinking, rest, sleep—everything will be scientifically regulated and with a full appreciation of its why and wherefore. Finally, a scientific mind must have detachment or else it will land itself into the lunatic asylum. The Upanishad says that whatever there is in this universe is from Him. It belongs to Him and must be surrendered to Him and then enjoyed. Enjoy-

ment and sorrow, success and failure will then be the same to you."

"One thing more," concluded Gandhiji. "Supposing the tyrant wants to destroy the spinning wheel itself. What then? My reply is that in that event we should ourselves perish with the spinning wheel and not live to witness its destruction. For every Khadi worker who thus sacrifices himself thousands will arise to take his place. That act of his will set the final seal of victory on the cause he represents."

Poona, 6-3-'46

PYARELAL

#### HAND-WEAVING AND HAND-SPINNING

(By M. K. Gandhi)

Shri Jajuji writes to say that whilst on the one hand, hand-spun yarn is piling up, on the other, handloom weavers are day by day giving up hand-spun yarn in preference to mill yarn. An appeal to the weavers through the columns of 'Harijan', whether in English or any of the Indian languages, will be good for nothing. Hardly any weaver reads 'Harijan' and if an attempt is made to read it out to him, he will not take interest in it. Hence the task of speaking to the weavers on the suicidal effect of abandoning hand-spun yarn devolves upon the devoted heads of Charkha Sangh workers. They have to reason out to the weavers how they will be ultimately responsible for killing their own occupation by excluding hand-spun yarn. As soon as the mill-owners can do so profitably, they will certainly stop selling mill yarn and will weave it themselves. They are not philanthropists. They have set up mills in order to make money. They will stop selling their yarn to handloom weavers, if they find weaving it more profitable. Therefore, it is a question of time when handloom weavers will be starved. These are really fed by hand-spinners even as they in their turn are fed by handloom weavers. They are twins complementary of each other. This fact should be brought home to the weavers by the Charkha Sangh. With loving patience and knowledge they should try to appreciate the difficulties of the weavers and learn how to remove them. Acharya Vinoba has pointed out one remedy namely to double and twist the yarn at the same time that the cones are unwound. If this practice becomes universal, there would be no untwisted hand-spun yarn available for weaving. It is found by experience that twisted hand-spun yarn is any day as weavable as mill-spun yarn, if indeed it is not more so. Since the time of my discharge from my last imprisonment, I have been proclaiming as vehemently as I can that the workers should master the art of weaving as well as they have mastered the art of spinning. Had they not taken to spinning themselves they would not have solved the many difficulties of spinners. They have now to make up for past neglect, however unconscious it may have been, by learning the art of weaving and by practising it assiduously. Then and then only will they understand the difficulties that professional weavers experience in weaving hand-spun yarn and be able to solve them. Uruli, 24-3-'46

(From *Harijanbandhu*)

# HARIJAN

March 31

1946

## CAPITALISM AND STRIKES

(By M. K. Gandhi)

How should capital behave when labour strikes? This question is in the air and has great importance at the present moment. One way is that of suppression named or nicknamed 'American'. It consists in suppression of labour through organized goondaism. Everybody would consider this as wrong and destructive. The other way, right and honourable, consists in considering every strike on its merits and giving labour its due—not what capital considers as due but what labour itself would so consider and enlightened public opinion acclaim as just.

One preliminary question will justly arise: why should there be a strike at all in any well-regulated concern? Strikes ought to be impossible when there is perfect understanding between capital and labour, mutual respect and recognition of equality. And since differences there would be sometimes between employers and employed even in the best-regulated concerns, why should there not be a system of arbitration between the parties so that they will always readily carry out in perfect good faith awards of arbitrators?

But we have to consider things not as they should be but as they are. As time progresses, the labour world is getting more insistent in its demands which are daily increasing, and it does not hesitate to resort to violence in its impatient enforcement of those demands. New methods of enforcing them are being employed. Workers do not hesitate to injure the property of the employers, dislocate machinery, harass old men and women who would not join the strike and forcibly keep out blacklegs. In these circumstances, how are the employers to behave?

In my opinion, employers and employed are equal partners even if employees are not considered superior. But what we see today is the reverse. The reason is that the employers harness intelligence on their side. They have the superior advantage which concentration of capital brings with it and they know how to make use of it. One individual rupee has very little potency but when money combines as capital, the combine derives a power different from and far in excess of the mere sum total of the individual rupees. A million drops individually are negligible. But in combination they make the ocean carrying on its bosom a fleet of ocean hounds. Whilst capital in India is fairly organized, labour is still in a more or less disorganized condition in spite of unions and their federation. Therefore, it lacks the power that true combination gives.

Moreover, it lacks intelligence, so much so that individuals fight against individuals, unions against

unions. Lack of intelligence leads to its exploitation by selfish and unscrupulous men even to the point of creating and promoting mischief. They know no better, being ignorant of the secret of non-violence. The net result is that the workers suffer. If labour were to understand the working of non-violence, the power generated by combination would any day exceed the power of dead metal in the hands of a few capitalists.

Hence my advice to the employers would be that they should willingly regard workers as the real owners of the concerns which they fancy they have created. They should further regard it as their duty to equip the employees with sound education that would draw out the intelligence dormant in them and gladly promote and welcome the power that this combination of the workers gives them.

This noble work cannot be done in a day by the employers. Meanwhile, what should those do who have to face the destruction wrought by strikers in their concerns? I would unhesitatingly advise such employers that they should at once offer the strikers full control of the concern which is as much the strikers' as theirs. They will vacate their premises not in a huff but because it is right, and to show their goodwill they would offer the employees the assistance of their engineers and other skilled staff. The employers will find in the end that they will lose nothing. Indeed their right action will disarm opposition and they will earn the blessings of their men. They will have made proper use of their capital. I would not consider such action as benevolent. It would be an intelligent use by the capitalists of their resources and honest dealing in regard to the employees whom they would have converted into honourable partners.

Uruli, 23-3-'46

## AN ENGLISHMAN'S DIFFICULTY

"However much we may want to be friendly the past tradition clings round your necks and drives you to desperation," said another member of the F. A. U. who met Gandhiji at Calcutta. "It seems to me," he added, "that there is hardly any hope of giving to a young Bengali student an idea of the better side of Englishmen unless perhaps he is transferred to England." The atmosphere in India was so poisoned that he wondered if it would not be better for Englishmen not to attempt to come to work in India just now but to wait for better times.

"Any friend, who is a real friend," replied Gandhiji, "and who comes in a spirit of service, not as a superior, is bound to be welcome. India, when she has come into her own will need all such assistance. The distrust of Englishmen, as you say, is there. It won't disappear even by transporting Indian students to England. You have got to understand it and live it down. It has its roots in history. The late Charlie Andrews and I were bed fellows. There was scarcely a thought in our mind which we did not share. He even adopted Indian dress though sometimes with grotesque results. But even

he could not escape suspicion. He was even dubbed "a spy". His was a very sensitive spirit. He suffered unspeakable anguish under these unmerited attacks and I was hard put to it to dispel the baseless distrust. 'If he is a spy, I am a spy,' I said to these critics. In the end C. F. A.'s spirit triumphed.

"Pearson was C. F. Andrews' disciple and friend. He too came in for his share of distrust. Then there is Stokes. "If I am to serve India I must become an Indian," he said to himself and married a Christian Rajput. He was boycotted by the Rajputs. The Government distrusted him too in the beginning. But he has lived down the distrust of both the Government and Indians."

"If then," observed Gandhiji, "even a C. F. Andrews and a Stokes and others had to labour under distrust, for you to be distrusted may not be wondered at. So far Indians have known Englishmen only as members of the ruling race—supercilious when they were not patronizing. The man in the street makes no distinction between such an Englishman and a good, humble European, between the Empire-builder Englishman of the old type that he has known and the new type that is now coming into being, burning to make reparation for what his forefathers did. Therefore, if one has not got the fire of sacrifice in him I would say to him: 'Do not come to India just now.' But if you are cast in a heroic mould there will be no difficulty. You will in the end be taken at your word if you persevere. Anyway those of you who are here have no reason for going back."

The same friend was able to elicit from Gandhiji what he considered to be the weak spots in the Indusco Plan of Chinese Co-operatives. Firstly, the Indusco was a product of abnormal times. Its production was war time and war purposes production stimulated by the Japanese blockade. Secondly, it was organized by foreign missionary enterprise and their work was tainted by the proselytization motive. "If you try to merely copy the Chinese Co-operatives in India you will end in miserable failure. Here you have to work among Indian Christians. The temperament is different, the character is different, and the circumstances are different. Co-operation which is rooted in the soil always works. You have therefore to find out for yourself what type of co-operative is best suited to the Indian temperament and soil. Even those who have become converts to orthodox Christianity are today veering round."

"By 'veering round' you mean going back?"

"Yes, I mean going back to real Christianity," to Christ, not Western Christianity. They are beginning to realize that Jesus was an Asiatic. Having seen this they are reading their Bible through Indian eyes. You should study the meaning of Indian Christianity through J. C. Kumarappa's book 'Practice and Precepts of Jesus'."

Uruli, 23-3-46

PYARELAL

## QUESTION BOX

(By M. K. Gandhi)

Q. What to do when the local Congress machinery refuses to act or work in a way which is effective?

A. A person who is a real Congressman will in such circumstances himself act singly or in co-operation with others purely in a spirit of service and give all the credit to the Congress organization. Supposing that many persons acted thus, Congress would rise from day to day. Ineffective workers would be shamed into becoming effective, the Congress machinery always remaining clean and intact. "In a spirit of service" is here the operative phrase. If the spirit is that of aggrandizement, although the work done may be effective, credit will probably go to the aggressor and the Congress will lose. That the aggressor will lose in the end need not be stressed.

Q. What should a Congress worker do when he faces a situation at a place which is outside his area of work?

A. Areas are prescribed for workers for their weakness, not for their strength. For a strong Congress worker all India is the area of his work and he will be found every time in the area where he is wanted most. Naturally he will be never regarded as an intruder or as an officious man. Appreciation of the service will be uppermost in the minds of all. It would be ludicrous and a sign of impotence, if a Congressman passing through an area not his own and finding a battle royal between two factions does not interpose himself between them, even at the cost of his life, on the untenable plea that the trouble was outside his area.

Q. Can the same person take up parliamentary work, constructive work as distinguished from the parliamentary and the organization work of the Congress, in addition to working for his own livelihood?

A. He must be a modern Hercules who can effectively do these things at the same time. I can conceive the possibility of the same person managing all these departments with a staff of efficient secretaries and clerks working under him. The point of the question, however, is wholly different. Division of labour is a necessity. One-man-show is always undesirable and is a positive hindrance to a system of organization. An organization like the British kingship is not personal. "The king is dead. Long live the king" Hence the saying, 'the king can do no wrong'. A king as an individual may be a rascal but personified as an organization he is perfect in the sense the word 'perfection' is understood in a given society. The moral is that however inefficient the persons in charge may be in the beginning stages, in a progressive organization persons taking charge should be above board and should put the organization first, themselves last. If an attempt is made to organize work through rascals, the organization will always have rascals at its head.

Q. August 1942 has brought a psychological change in the public mind. They do not await orders from

the Congress for observance of days, etc. Other parties often take advantage of this spontaneous effort and associate their programme with it, while official local Congress either keeps mum or inactive. It also often happens that programmes and policies as laid down by the Working Committee are not automatically adopted by the Provincial Congress Committees or are sometimes worked out half-heartedly. Some also refuse to create a machinery for it, till they are officially called upon to do so. In such circumstances, what is expected of Congressmen?

A. This is a good question. If Congressmen have really learnt to act for themselves since 1942 August, it is a great thing. But I do not believe it. Those only act for themselves who think for themselves. It does not matter whether in doing so they make mistakes. A child often stumbles before it begins to walk. Therefore the effort ceases to be spontaneous or individual when one associates with any programme that comes his way. The secret of the August resolution was that when the Congress as an organization ceased to function every Congressman became his own master, which is wholly different from becoming a pawn in any other person's or group's or party's game.

The second part of the question shows also that 1942 did not teach Congressmen to think and act independently. If they had learnt that lesson truly and well, any programme laid down by the Working Committee would be followed by Congressmen wholeheartedly and the response from Provincial Committees and all constituent elements would be spontaneous, such that the whole organization would move like one man. Such was my expectation in 1942. That it was not so fulfilled is a matter of history. That the people acted somehow without being paralysed by the wholesale onslaught of the Government stands to their credit. How much more creditable it would have been if they had fully carried out the policy of non-violence explicitly laid down in that resolution? If my argument is correct, it follows that Congressmen with understanding would follow implicitly the Working Committee's resolutions without reference to the action of their neighbours. When organizational effort stops or is neutralized or becomes ineffective, every individual belonging to it holds himself responsible for the activity of his organization and then gradually builds it up.

Q. When sporadic strikes are such as cannot be supported by the Congress, what should Congressmen and the public do to put an end to them?

A. In the first place, if the Congress organization were complete there would be no sporadic strikes and any other strike would be unjustified for the simple reason that a people's organization must shoulder the burden of every justifiable strike within the sphere of that organization. But today unhappily the Congress, powerful as it is, has not attained that supreme position. Hence every sporadic strike has to be judged on merits irrespective of the party that has made itself responsible for it.

And when a strike is indefensible on merits the Congress and the public should unequivocally condemn it. The natural result would be that the men on strike would go back to work. If the strike is justified the institution against which it has been declared would be likewise condemned if it employs blacklegs or other questionable means to force strikers into submission.

Uruli, 23-3-'46

## Notes

### Wastefulness

Correspondence continues to pour in saying that stored food material being declared unfit for human consumption is thrown away. Skimmed milk also is thrown away for want of custom and condensed milk is lying idle owing to ignorance. Accumulation of food material at the ports will not mitigate distress unless it is promptly taken to the places where it is immediately required. Worse than this however is the triple waste going on now side by side with ever growing famine conditions. All such waste takes place for lack of a living contact between the people and the rulers.

Uruli, 24-3-'46

M. K. G.

### A. I. V. I. A. News

1. Up to 31st December 1945, members of the A. I. V. I. A. used to get the "Gram Udyog Patrika" free of charge. But as expenses have gone up, it is proposed to charge all members except those who are on actual field work half rates.

2. The following books have been published since the Board last met:

1. Palm Gur
2. Views of Maganwadi
3. Soap Making
4. Dhotijama

3. Shri Bharatan Kumarappa has asked to be relieved of his duties as Assistant Secretary. The Board has accepted his resignation with much regret. His loss after ten years of valuable work will be greatly felt by the A. I. V. I. A.

4. It is proposed to run a rural health centre in Sindhi village either under the aegis of the Kasturba Fund or independently.

[From the minutes of the meeting of the Board of Management]

A. K.

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By M. K. Gandhi

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## GANDHIJI'S COMMUNISM

Gandhiji has often claimed in the course of his discussions with Communist and Socialist friends that he is a better Communist or a Socialist than they. Their goal is identical. The difference in regard to the means and the technique employed is however fundamental. Changing the structure of society through violence and untruth has no attraction for him because he knows that it will not benefit the dumb millions of India. During the period of his detention in the Aga Khan palace, he studied Communist literature. He has a scientific mind and the knowledge of Communism and Socialism picked up from his talks with friends and casual reading did not satisfy him. He read *Das Capital* and went through some of the other writings of Marx as also of Engels, Lenin and Stalin. He read some books about the Reds in China too and at the end of it was convinced more than ever that Communism of his conception was the only thing that could bring relief to the suffering humanity. In his Ashram and the institutions that are being run under his guidance and inspiration, the ruling principle is: "To each according to his need, from each according to his capacity." His Ashrams are thus themselves experiments in Communism based on non-violence and Indian village conditions. In Sevagram Ashram the dictum is followed that the inmates are there only on the sufferance of the village people. A cantankerous fellow felled some Ashram trees for his use as fuel though he had no title to them. Another encroached upon the right of way through his field although he had accepted compensation for it. No legal redress was applied for. An announcement was made that the Ashram people were there only for the service of the village folk and that they would go away elsewhere if the latter did not want them. Ultimately the trouble makers were persuaded by their fellow villagers to behave reasonably. In Sabarmati Ashram the women inmates not only merged their domestic kitchens into the communal kitchen and continued to run it but were even persuaded not only to take children other than their own into their families and to look after them like their own but also to let their children be looked after by others. Here was an experiment of pulling down of the walls and emancipation of women without the disintegration of family life—a veritable revolution less the anarchy. But as a friend humorously remarked after dining in the common kitchen of the Talimi Sangh, which feeds more than a hundred individuals, "Gandhiji calls it a *rasoda* (kitchen) and it sounds commonplace; the Communists would call it a 'Commune' and everybody would be impressed by it." Did not the good old knight of Addison wonder how a certain play<sup>3</sup> could be a tragedy since there was not a line in it but he could understand?

### MEANING OF ECONOMIC EQUALITY

"What exactly do you mean by economic equality," Gandhiji was asked at the Constructive Workers' Conference during his recent tour of

Madras "and what is statutory trusteeship as conceived by you?"

Gandhiji's reply was that economic equality of his conception did not mean that everyone would literally have the same amount. It simply meant that everybody should have enough for his or her needs. For instance, he required two *shawls* in winter whereas his grand nephew Kanu Gandhi who stayed with him and was like his own son did not require any warm clothing whatsoever. Gandhiji required goat's milk, oranges and other fruit. Kanu could do with ordinary food. He envied Kanu but there was no point in it. Kanu was a young man whereas he was an old man of 76. The monthly expense of his food was far more than that of Kanu but that did not mean that there was economic inequality between them. The elephant needs a thousand times more food than the ant, but that is not an indication of inequality. So the real meaning of economic equality was: "To each according to his need." That was the definition of Marx. If a single man demanded as much as a man with wife and four children that would be a violation of economic equality.

"Let no one try to justify the glaring difference between the classes and the masses, the prince and the pauper, by saying that the former need more. That will be idle sophistry and a travesty of my argument," he continued. "The contrast between the rich and the poor today is a painful sight. The poor villagers are exploited by the foreign government and also by their own countrymen—the city-dwellers. They produce the food and go hungry. They produce milk and their children have to go without it. It is disgraceful. Everyone must have balanced diet, a decent house to live in, facilities for the education of one's children and adequate medical relief." That constituted his picture of economic equality. He did not want to taboo everything above and beyond the bare necessities but they must come after the essential needs of the poor are satisfied. First things must come first.

### STATUTORY TRUSTEESHIP

As for the present owners of wealth they would have to make their choice between class war and voluntarily converting themselves into trustees of their wealth. They would be allowed to retain the stewardship of their possessions and to use their talent to increase the wealth, not for their own sakes, but for the sake of the nation and therefore without exploitation. The state would regulate the rate of commission which they would get commensurate with the service rendered and its value to society. Their children would inherit the stewardship only if they proved their fitness for it.

"Supposing India becomes a free country tomorrow," he concluded, "all the capitalists will have an opportunity of becoming statutory trustees." But such a statute will not be imposed from above. It will have to come from below. When the people understand the implications of trusteeship and the atmosphere is ripe for it, the people themselves,



beginning with *gram panchayats*, will begin to introduce such statutes. Such a thing coming from below is easy to swallow. Coming from above, it is liable to prove a dead weight.

#### HIS QUARREL WITH THE SOCIALISTS

Q. "What is the difference between your technique and that of the Communists or Socialists for realizing the goal of economic equality?"

A. "The Socialists and Communists say they can do nothing to bring about economic equality today. They will just carry on propaganda in its favour and to that end they believe in generating and accentuating hatred. They say, when they get control over the State they will enforce equality. Under my plan the State will be there to carry out the will of the people, not to dictate to them or force them to do its will. I shall bring about economic equality through non-violence, by converting the people to my point of view by harnessing the forces of love as against hatred. I will not wait till I have converted the whole society to my view but will straightaway make a beginning with myself. It goes without saying that I cannot hope to bring about economic equality of my conception, if I am the owner of fifty motor cars or even of ten *bighas* of land. For that I have to reduce myself to the level of the poorest of the poor. That is what I have been trying to do for the last fifty years or more, and so I claim to be a foremost Communist although I make use of cars and other facilities offered to me by the rich. They have no hold on me and I can shed them at a moment's notice, if the interests of the masses demand it."

#### THE NON-VIOLENT SANCTION

Q. "What is the place of Satyagraha in making the rich realize their duty towards the poor?"

A. "The same as against the foreign power. Satyagraha is a law of universal application. Beginning with the family its use can be extended to every other circle. Supposing a land-owner exploits his tenants and mulcts them of the fruit of their toil by appropriating it to his own use. When they expostulate with him he does not listen and raises objections that he requires so much for his wife, so much for his children and so on. The tenants or those who have espoused their cause and have influence will make an appeal to his wife to expostulate with her husband. She would probably say that for herself she does not need his exploited money. The children will say likewise that they would earn for themselves what they need.

'Supposing further that he listens to nobody or that his wife and children combine against the tenants, they will not submit. They will quit if asked to do so but they will make it clear that the land belongs to him who tills it. The owner cannot till all the land himself and he will have to give in to their just demands. It may, however, be that the tenants are replaced by others. Agitation short of violence will then continue till the replacing tenants see their error and make common cause with the evicted tenants. Thus Satyagraha is a process of educating public opinion, such that it covers all the

elements of society and in the end makes itself irresistible. Violence interrupts the process and prolongs the real revolution of the whole social structure."

The conditions necessary for the success of Satyagraha are: (1) The Satyagrahi should not have any hatred in his heart against the opponent. (2) The issue must be true and substantial. (3) The Satyagrahi must be prepared to suffer till the end for his cause.

Poona, 4-3-'46

PYARELAL

#### COMMUNAL UNITY AND NON-UNTOUCHABILITY IN THE I.N.A.

The Azad Hind movement in East Asia solved many problems. And one of them was the major and intricate problem of communal unity. Although efforts towards this direction were made ever since the inception of the movement in 1942, it became a reality only after the arrival of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose. There was another question and that was of untouchability, though on a minor scale. In East Asia, the question of untouchability did not confront us so much as it did or does in India. Anyhow, this ill too was remedied as a result of universal training of Indians in the I. N. A. camps and offices after Netaji's arrival.

What were the ways and means adopted to achieve these objects may be a long story. But the achievement can be attributed to three main factors: Firstly, absence of the third power; secondly, Netaji's direct approach to the problems and thirdly, Netaji's apparent ignoring of the problems.

Now, what the people may be interested in, is how this achievement of communal unity and eradication of untouchability was evident. For that, I may pen the following, covering both the combatant and non-combatant sections of the militant organization of Azad Hind.

With the elimination of the British power from East Asia, the communal differences among Indians also started fading away. The first scene of communal harmony was observed in Bangkok in June 1942, when about 120 representatives of the Indian community in East Asia gathered there for Conference. There were among them Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians and others. They stayed together, ate together, and resolved together to organize the Indian community into one body and under one banner.

Then came February 1943, and Gandhiji's historic fast. Throughout East Asia, rallies were held where all Indians belonging to different religions and of different castes and creeds gathered and demanded release of the Mahatma. Prayers were held in temples, mosques, *gurudwaras* and churches for the long life of Gandhiji. That presented an admirable and thrilling scene of communal unity.

Then came the advent of Netaji, and along with that a revolutionary change in society and in the organization. Netaji had asked for 'Total Mobilization' for the coming armed struggle for India's freedom. To this call of Netaji, the response was universal from all sections of the community — from Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians and others. They offered their services as combatant and non-combatant volunteers.



Some of these volunteers were absorbed in the Azad Hind Sangh, the Party behind the Azad Hind Fauj and the Azad Hind Government. Others—a majority of the volunteers—joined the ranks of the Fauj. The Sangh had a network of branches throughout East Asia. In every branch workers consisting of Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and Christians worked together. Wherever there were large numbers of workers, as was the case in places like Bangkok, Singapore, Rangoon, Saigon, Hongkong, they used to live in messes. These were joint. There was no separate Hindu, Muslim, Sikh or Christian mess. There used to be one kitchen for all members of all religions. Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and Christians lived together, ate at the same table and worked together.

Same was the case in the I. N. A.. Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians used to live in the same barracks. There were Brahmins, as well as Harijans, there were Maulvis as well as Ahirs; there were caste-Hindus as well as the so-called untouchables in the same barracks. There were no separate *langars*. All the soldiers ate together. The same rations were supplied to the soldiers and officers. Beef and pork were prohibited in the messes of the Azad Hind Sangh and the Azad Hind Fauj. There was no problem of *jhatka* and *halal*.

RAMSINGH RAWAL

[Note: Except for repetitions, the foregoing is published as it was received. The information is revealing. The natural question is: now that these soldiers have returned, will the same comradeship persist? It ought to. M. K. G.]

Bombay, 14-3-'46

### IDEALS FOR THE I. N. A.

Major General Shah Nawaz and Col. Sehgal took occasion during Gandhiji's stay in Bombay to discuss with him at length the question of the future of the discharged I. N. A. men. The men were anxious, they said, to distinguish themselves in national service along non-violent lines, but unless they were suitably absorbed in civil activities and properly guided they might be exploited and led into devious ways by unscrupulous agencies. What ideal should they follow, they asked. Gandhiji repeated to them the advice he had previously given to some discharged I. N. A. men who had met him in Madras. He had told them that it should be derogatory to the dignity and self-respect of a soldier to live upon charity. The ideal which they should set before themselves was to earn their bread by honest industry. The I. N. A. Relief Fund was there but it would be wrong to use it for providing doles. He described to them how in South Africa he had provided relief to dependents of Satyagraha prisoners by settling them on Tolstoy Farm where they had to labour according to capacity. The merit of this method was that it could be multiplied to any degree without proving costly and burdensome. The real test of the I. N. A., he told them, was to come only now. In the fighting line there was the romance and incitement, not so in civil life. The country was today faced with the spectre of famine. Would they help the people to

fight it with the same courage, cohesion, doggedness and resourcefulness which they had shown on the battlefield? Would they show the same diligence, mastery and skill in handling the spade, the pickaxe and the hoe as they did in shouldering the rifle? Digging of wells and breaking stony ground to grow food and plying the wheel and the shuttle to clothe the naked was the nation's need today. Would they respond to the call? They had physical stamina, discipline and, what was more, a feeling of solidarity and oneness, untainted by narrow communalism. All that ought to put them in a singular position of vantage for introducing non-violent discipline and organization among the masses.

Constructive activity could absorb every one of the I. N. A. men who was willing and worthy of his name. If they took up that work, not one of them need or would remain unemployed.

As one listened while Gandhiji outlined the ideals for the I. N. A. men one was irresistibly reminded of the following description by a distinguished English historian of another national army that has left its mark on history. The reference is to Cromwell's Ironsides:

"These persons, sober, moral, diligent and accustomed to reflect had been induced to take up arms, not by the pressure of want, not by the love of novelty and license, not by the arts of the recruiting officers, but by religious and political zeal, mingled with the desire of distinction and promotion. The boast of the soldiers was . . . that they were no janissaries but freeborn Englishmen who had of their own accord put their lives in jeopardy for the liberties and religion of England and whose right and duty was to watch over the welfare of the nation which they had saved.

\* \* \*

"In war this strange force was irresistible . . . Other leaders have maintained order as strict, other leaders have inspired their followers with zeal as ardent, but in his (Cromwell's) camp alone the most rigid discipline was found in company with the fiercest enthusiasm. His troops moved to victory with the precision of machines, while burning with the wildest fanaticism of crusaders.

"But that which chiefly distinguished the armies of Cromwell from other armies was the austere morality and the fear of God which pervaded all ranks . . . In that singular camp no oath was heard, no drunkenness or gambling was seen, and during the long dominion of the soldiery, the property of the peaceable citizen and the honour of women were held sacred. . . ."

But their greatest victory, records the same historian, was won not in fighting but when they had ceased to fight.

"The troops were now to be disbanded. Fifty thousand men, accustomed to the profession of arms, were at once thrown on the world: and experience seemed to warrant the belief that this change would produce much misery and crime, that the discharged veterans would be seen begging in every street, or that they would be driven by hunger to pillage. But no such result followed. In a few months there remained not a trace indicating that the most

formidable army in the world had just been absorbed into the mass of the community. The Royalists themselves confessed that, in every department of honest industry, the discarded warriors prospered beyond other men, that none was charged with any theft or robbery, that none was heard to ask an alms, or that if a baker, a mason, or a waggoner attracted notice by his diligence and sobriety, he was in all probability one of Oliver's old soldiers."

Poona, 20-3-'46

PYARELAL

## FAMINES AND BIRTH RATE

(By M. K. Gandhi)

Major Gen. Sir John McGaw, President, India Office Medical Board, is reported by a correspondent to have said :

"Famines in India will recur; in fact India is today facing perpetual famine. Unless something is done to decrease the birth rate in India, the country will be leading straight for a calamity."

The correspondent asks what I have to say on this grave issue.

For me, this and some other ways of explaining away famines in India is to divert the attention from the only cause of recurring famines in this benighted land. I have stated and repeat here that famines of India are not a calamity descended upon us from nature but is a calamity created by the rulers — whether through ignorant indifference or whether consciously or otherwise does not matter. Prevention against drought is not beyond human effort and ingenuity. Such effort has not proved ineffective in other countries. In India a sustained intelligent effort has never been made.

The bogey of increasing birth rate is not a new thing. It has been often trotted out. Increase in population is not and ought not to be regarded as a calamity to be avoided. Its regulation or restriction by artificial methods is a calamity of the first grade whether we know it or not. It is bound to degrade the race, if it becomes universal which, thank God, it is never likely to be. Pestilence, wars and famines are cursed antidotes against cursed lust which is responsible for unwanted children. If we would avoid this three-fold curse we would avoid too the curse of unwanted children by the sovereign remedy of self-control. The evil consequences of artificial methods are being seen by discerning men even now. Without however encroaching upon the moral domain, let me say that propagation of the race rabbit-wise must undoubtedly be stopped; but not so as to bring greater evils in its train. It should be stopped by methods which in themselves ennoble the race. In other words, it is all a matter of proper education which would embrace every department of life; and dealing with one curse will take in its orbit all the others. A way is not to be avoided because it is upward and therefore uphill. Man's upward progress necessarily means ever increasing difficulty, which is to be welcomed.

Poona, 19-3-'46

## CONGRESSMEN APATHETIC

(By M. K. Gandhi)

Q. "I am glad that you have expressed yourself in the matter of opening a temple to Harijans in Nellore. It should open the eyes of many Congressmen. The reason given for unwillingness to open the temple was that it might adversely affect the chances of Congress success in the elections."

A. If this represents the general sentiment, it augurs ill for Congress. Even a popular democratic India-wide organization like the Congress cannot afford to be untrue to its policy (if it may not be called creed) of removing untouchability root and branch. Throughout my close contact with the Congress, ever since my return to India in 1915, I have found that the more the Congress has held to its main purpose, the more popular it has become. A democratic organization has to dare to do the right at all cost. He who panders to the weaknesses of a people degrades both himself and the people and leads them not to democratic but mob rule. The line of demarcation between democracy and mobocracy is often thin but rigid and stronger than steel unbreakable. The one leads to life and progress, the other is death pure and simple. In the ultimate analysis, the cause of our fall is to be sought from within and not from without. All the empires of the world could not have bent us, if as a people we had been above suspicion and temptation. This may not be regarded as a mere truism. If we recognize the fundamental facts, we would be true and patient and able to deal with whatever difficulty that may face us whether from within or without. Preparedness to lose all elections rather than sacrifice a principle, is the surest way to success at every election. The results prove that the policy laid down by the Congress in 1920 has led to success from stage to stage, but only to the extent that the Congress has been true to the fundamentals of the policy it accepted during that eventful year. Untouchability is to go, if India is to live and thrive as a nation.

Poona, 21-3-'46

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